

**Seattle's Neighborhood Planning
Program, 1995-1999:
Documenting the Process**

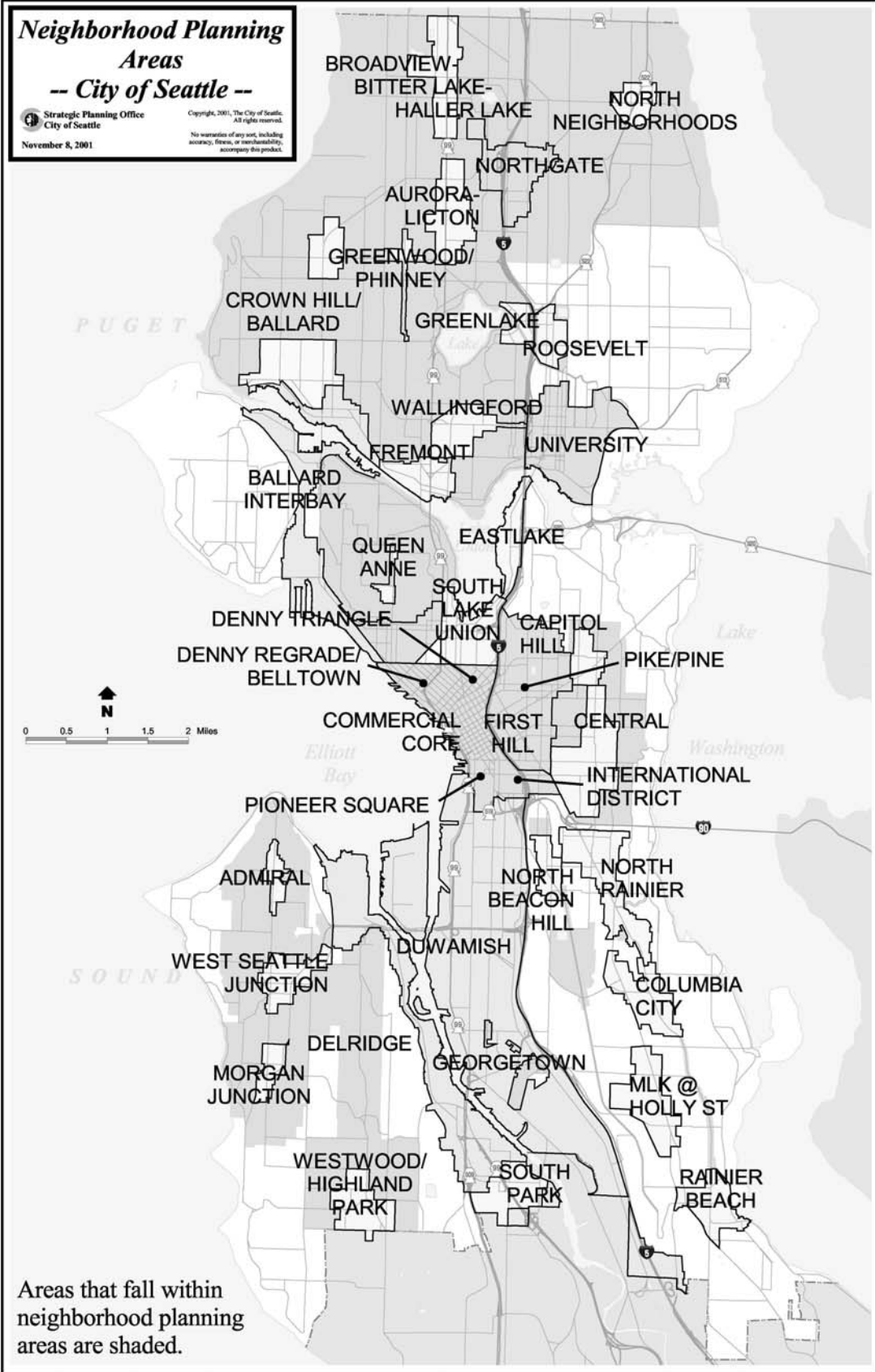
S E A T T L E P L A N N I N G C O M M I S S I O N

November 2001

**Neighborhood Planning
Areas
-- City of Seattle --**

Strategic Planning Office
City of Seattle
November 8, 2001

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Areas that fall within neighborhood planning areas are shaded.

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INTRODUCTION

In the past century, Seattle has grown from a pioneer boomtown to a major city on the cutting edge. Its flourishing economy, breathtaking environment, and strong neighborhoods have made Seattle one of the country's best places to live. In fact, the city has witnessed marked population growth throughout the past two decades. In order to preserve and enhance Seattle's attractive qualities and prepare for continued development, City officials developed a 20-year Comprehensive Plan (1994-2014) called "Towards a Sustainable Seattle". The Comprehensive Plan meets the requirements of the state's Growth Management Act, which requires major cities and towns to create a plan to manage expected future growth. Seattle's Comprehensive Plan policies articulate a vision of how Seattle will grow in ways that will sustain its people's values: social equity, environmental stewardship, economic opportunity and community. The elements of the Plan included land use, economic development, neighborhood planning, transportation, housing, cultural resources, human development, capital facilities and utilities.

What is this Report?

This report documents neighborhood planning, an integral part of implementing the Comprehensive Plan. In 1995, a citywide program called the Neighborhood Planning Program (NPP) was established. The goal of the NPP was to create a collaborative program where community members would take legitimized leadership roles and work with the City of Seattle to envision, design, and implement a neighborhood plan for those areas in the city that were targeted to accommodate future growth. This report documents the NPP. It will inform the reader of the projected goals of this unique program, describe the steps taken to achieve these goals, and provide examples of actual challenges and achievements. Seattle's experience will provide a resource for local governments and individuals who want to improve their own communities through neighborhood planning.

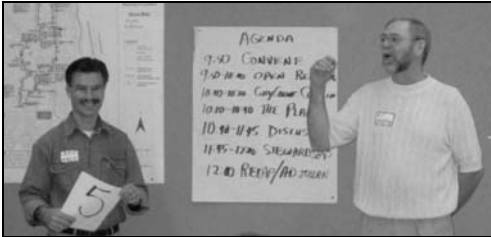
Seattle's innovative Neighborhood Planning Program captured the interest of cities and towns across the country. It was a bold experiment in community-led neighborhood planning in which the City and neighborhoods shaped the program as it was carried out. First, the program required the City and neighborhoods to collaborate intensively and contribute their resources to produce neighborhood plans. Second, while Seattle's planning program was thoughtfully crafted at its inception, its process evolved as the City and neighborhoods identified and overcame obstacles during the course of neighborhood planning. This evolutionary approach resulted both in innovations and struggles from all groups involved. Finally, the program allowed people to design their plans according to the needs and characteristics of their planning areas. Few jurisdictions have granted communities the combination of support and autonomy experienced by Seattle's neighborhood planners. In doing so, Seattle's NPP left an indelible mark on the history of neighborhood planning in Seattle and throughout the country.

READING THIS REPORT

- A "Who's Who in the NPP" is included on page 35 of this document.
- A set of appendices present significant issues in greater depth and can be ordered through the Seattle Planning Commission. These appendices include the following topics: Seattle's history of neighborhood planning, neighborhood planning boundaries, community review and validation, issue identification, outreach, support and resources, training, and ordinances and resolutions.
- An extensive collection of additional texts, forms and resources is also available. If interested, please contact the City of Seattle Planning Commission at 684-0433.

Section I

- ◆ BACKGROUND
- ◆ OVERVIEW



Section I

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

Neighborhood Planning throughout Seattle's History

Neighborhood planning has a long history in Seattle. As early as the 1960s government-sponsored neighborhood planning drew from federal Model Cities programs and focused on revitalizing distressed neighborhoods. In the 1970s, the City led and staffed a series of neighborhood planning efforts that heavily involved members of the public in identifying goals and priorities for both land use and specific neighborhood improvements. Many of the projects were implemented by Community Development Block Grants with other local and federal funds.

In the late 1980s, at the request of elected officials, the Seattle Planning Commission analyzed the relationship between the City and its neighborhoods. Their purpose was to improve communication between neighborhood organizations and the City. Its recommendations led to the establishment of the Department of Neighborhoods, a Neighborhood Matching Fund, and the creation of a series of District Councils and a City Neighborhood Council. The Neighborhood Matching Fund generated many smaller, focused planning efforts and community development projects initiated by people in neighborhood-based organizations. While a few of these efforts focused on broad policies to guide new development, most resulted in numerous small, physical improvements in neighborhoods across the city. Examples of Neighborhood Matching Fund projects include sidewalk art, improvements to playfields, and traffic improvement projects.

In the early 1990s, City and neighborhood interest in neighborhood planning re-emerged with the adoption of the citywide Comprehensive Plan. This provided the impetus for the NPP that is described in this report. This time the focus was on how growth could be accommodated in ways that strengthened the city's already healthy neighborhoods. As will be described below, the approach was different than in the past, giving neighborhoods much more responsibility and autonomy in defining the scope and carrying out neighborhood planning.

Comprehensive Plan and Growth Management Act (GMA)

In 1990, the Washington State Legislature passed the Growth Management Act (GMA). Among other goals, the GMA set forth a statewide framework for focusing and managing population growth and density within urban areas in Washington. Each city and county in the fast-growing areas of the state was required to create a comprehensive plan to articulate its strategy for managing growth for the following twenty years. Local jurisdictional plans were required to coordinate with each other across counties and multi-county regions.

Seattle's Comprehensive Plan stated that "The goal that unifies all the elements of the Comprehensive Plan is to preserve the best quality of Seattle's distinct neighborhoods while responding positively and creatively to the pressures of change and growth." To accomplish this, the Comprehensive Plan's growth management policy was organized around the Urban Villages Strategy. It designated 40 specific areas as Residential

A City of Unique Neighborhoods

Seattle is bounded on the west by Puget Sound and on the east by fresh-water Lake Washington. The city is further traversed by rivers and canals, lakes and hills. The city's social environment is as diverse as its physical geography. It is home to an array of neighborhoods and business districts that are deeply rooted in the region's history.

Seattle's political leadership has historically served citywide interests. The Mayor and City Council are elected at-large from throughout the city. This has been balanced in part by the historic existence of the strong neighborhood organizations.

NPP Chronology

1990

- ◆ *State Growth Management Act is passed by the Washington State Legislature*

Autumn 1994

- ◆ *Comprehensive Plan Adopted*
- ◆ *Resolution 29015 established the NPP*

March 1995

- ◆ *First meeting of the Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee (NPAC)*

December 1995

- ◆ *Resolution 29244 sets forth general parameters for funding the NPP*

Early 1996

- ◆ *Neighborhoods embark on Phase I planning*

Mid to Late 1997

- ◆ *Many neighborhoods begin preparing for Phase II planning*

1998-2000

- ◆ *Neighborhood plans move through the City's Approval and Adoption Process*

Urban Villages, Hub Urban Villages, Urban Center Villages and Manufacturing/Industrial Centers. The Urban Villages described increasing levels of residential and/or employment growth targeted to areas that had zoning and infrastructure capacity to accommodate growth. Residents and businesses in these areas would then plan for their growth targets through development of individual neighborhood plans.

Many community members voiced concern and opposition to the “urban villages” strategy, believing it would lead to unfettered growth and erosion of the city’s predominantly single family character. In response to these concerns the City Council made a commitment that urban village neighborhoods would define, through neighborhood plans, how the growth management goals and targets would be met in their area.

Establishing the NPP

In the autumn of 1994, City staff began to work with members of the community to translate the Comprehensive Plan’s Urban Villages Strategy into the NPP. Through a day-long workshop, forums, and public hearings, people helped identify community concerns, establish criteria for neighborhood planning, develop boundaries for the planning areas, and create methods to define the public’s role in these processes.

In October of 1994, the City Council passed Resolution 29015, which formally established the NPP. According to the resolution, “*The purposes of the neighborhood planning program are to enable the City and the community to work in partnership to improve the quality of life within the city by: 1) helping people achieve their goals for their neighborhoods; 2) involving the neighborhoods in determining the best ways to achieve established citywide goals; and 3) creating an environment which will encourage building of community within neighborhoods.*”

OVERVIEW

Relationship between City and Neighborhoods

The City established the Neighborhood Planning Program (NPP) with the underlying philosophy that neighborhoods, when given support and resources by the City, are best able to identify and address their own needs within the framework of citywide vision, goals and policies. NPP’s structure was designed for the City to guide and support neighborhood groups as they planned for the future of their neighborhoods. Neighborhood groups would execute the program under their own leadership and guidance with City support. NPP’s community-based foundation required the program’s guidelines to flex enough to accommodate the neighborhoods’ variations (in demographics, history, current concerns, etc.) so the neighborhoods could work within the program guidelines and still produce a neighborhood plan to meet their unique needs. Broadly, the City required the final neighborhood plans to be:

- Consistent with the Comprehensive Plan
- Inclusive
- Legal
- Collaborative with the City

While the City allowed neighborhoods to create their own plans, the neighborhoods were required to conform to City regulations and to the terms of the contracts that were

signed with the City. The City agreed to provide technical and financial support to neighborhoods during the planning process. After the plans were created and approved, the City would prepare a work plan in response to neighborhood recommendations. The neighborhoods would prioritize their recommendations and draw from their own resources as much as possible in implementing their plans.

(“Principles of Partnership”, Summary of NPP; Interview with Karma Ruder, 8/2/01)

The Neighborhood Planning Office (NPO)

The Neighborhood Planning Process required significant staff support. In order to prepare for the neighborhoods’ response to the NPP the City completed a number of preparatory tasks and underwent some structural changes. First, the City created the Neighborhood Planning Office (NPO), which carried out the NPP. The office guided the neighborhoods in the planning process, and served as the facilitator and mediator between the City and the neighborhoods and among stakeholders within the community.

The Project Manager

The director of the NPO reported directly to the Mayor. She hired ten people with strong community organizing and communication skills to serve in project manager positions.

The project managers:

- Made initial contact with neighborhoods eligible for neighborhood planning in their geographically assigned areas
- Assessed the organizing capacity of each neighborhood and assisted with community organizing where additional capacity was needed
- Acted as a liaison between the City and neighborhoods as they organized and carried out neighborhood planning, including guiding people through City procedures
- Facilitated resolution of conflicts and helped solve problems as needed;
- Assisted people in designing and developing outreach and involvement strategies
- Encouraged collaboration among neighborhood planners, and between neighborhood planners and City staff

Project managers reported directly to the NPO Director. As the liaison between the neighborhoods and the City, project managers reported neighborhoods’ progress to City departments, the City Council, and the Mayor’s Office. While project managers functioned as the neighborhoods’ advocates in City proceedings, they also advised the NPO Director in approving or delaying neighborhoods’ advancement in the planning process. Managers were also responsible for authorizing reimbursement requests.

The Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee (NPAC)

The City established the Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee (NPAC) in order to ensure that the Neighborhood Planning Program was community-driven. The Neighborhood Plan Advisory Committee was composed of the following: representatives from District Councils and the City Neighborhood Council, City

“Because of the NPP Seattle has a much more educated populace regarding planning, diversity and growth.”
--neighborhood planner

“Neighborhoods faced vastly different issues and situations. They responded to City requirements in differing ways. Planning groups’ structures were diverse, as were their working relationships with City departments, project managers and consultants.”
--neighborhood planner



DON Project Managers



Council, the Planning Commission, directors from key City departments and representatives from neighborhood planning groups. Staff from the Department of Neighborhoods and other City staff also attended NPAC meetings. NPAC advised NPO on implementing the Neighborhood Planning Program. The advisory committee helped develop guidelines for the program and resolve substantive issues (planning boundaries, validation and outreach requirements, and allocation of funds). NPAC provided a valuable forum for addressing various aspects of the NPP and helped refine and articulate the process as well as desired outcomes for the program. While NPAC provided advice rather than oversight to NPO, NPO sought consensus on key issues and aspects of the program through this forum. Finally, NPAC worked with NPO to identify and advocate for resources for the neighborhoods.

(Karma Ruder interview, 8/2/01)

Funding



In 1995, the City allocated \$4.75 million from its General Fund to implement the Neighborhood Planning Program. The funds financed the Neighborhood Planning Office and the neighborhoods' planning activities.

Funding amounts for the various types of urban villages ranged as follows:

- Urban center villages and Manufacturing/Industrial areas...\$80,000 – \$100,000
- Urban villages.....\$60,000 – \$80,000

These funding amounts were based on criteria developed by NPO, guided by NPAC:

- Current population and projected future growth
- Current employment and projected future growth
- Number and size of business nodes
- Number of non-English speaking people in the planning area (to compensate for monies spent on translation and translated materials)

The City allocated funds to neighborhoods for two phases of the planning process. Each planning group received \$10,000 for Phase 1 once it completed pre-planning requirements. These funds focused on outreach and initial research on conditions and needs in the community. Planning areas could apply for additional Phase 1 funding, but these funds were subtracted from Phase 2 funding. It should be noted that the City Council allocated substantial supplemental funds to underwrite the costs of mailing materials from the planning committees to stakeholders during Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the planning process. Planning phases are described in detail later in this document.

“Contracting could have been easier. Relying on outside fiscal agents was pretty burdensome. It might have been easier if the City provided some intermediary steps or services. I’m not sure if the “freedom” the City gave us resulted in more control over the program.”
 --neighborhood planner

Contracting

The City of Seattle and neighborhood planning groups formalized their relationship and funding arrangements through legal contracts prior to Phase 1 and Phase 2. The contracts specified the scope of work, timelines by which work was to be completed, performance standards and reporting, and how funds were to be disbursed. Because most neighborhood planning groups were not incorporated as legal entities, each planning group selected a fiscal agent who distributed City funds for subcontractor payments and volunteer reimbursements. A variety of organizations served as the neighborhoods' fiscal agent including local chambers of commerce, community organizations, and non-profit organizations.

Reporting

NPO ensured that neighborhood planning groups were meeting the obligations of their contracts through several means:

- Performance Reports: Neighborhood groups submitted performance reports to project managers on a frequent basis, often accompanied by a request for funds. The reports were one-page in length, describing the neighborhood's efforts to conduct inclusive outreach and assessing the progress of the community's work.
- Check-ins: In addition to performance reports, planning groups were required to "check in" with the NPO Director once during Phase 1 and twice during Phase 2. Check-ins consisted of meetings between the project manager, and at least one member of the neighborhood planning committee and the NPO director. While the meetings were conducted on a formal basis, the results of the meetings were not always recorded.
- Record Keeping: Planning groups were required to maintain copies of flyers, logs of media coverage, lists of speakers, and records of meetings as a record of their compliance with the program's requirements. NPO project managers also kept files that contained key documents from each neighborhood planning project.
- Manager/Neighborhood Relationship: Project managers worked closely with neighborhood planning groups, assisting and monitoring their progress on their scopes of work on an almost daily basis. According to Jane Morris, Contract Manager for NPO, "This information, though not formally documented, was a critical accountability measure for both the City and the neighborhood groups."



Section II

THE PHASES OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING PROJECT



Section II

PHASES OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING PROJECT

NPO worked with NPAC to develop the parameters of the planning program, seeking advice from various City staff as needed. NPO and NPAC developed a four-phase planning process:

- The Pre-Application Phase
Neighborhood organizing groups discussed questions of neighborhood boundaries, funding, and the relationship between the City and neighborhood planning groups. They then submitted an application to the City to be recognized as a participating area in the NPP.
- Phase 1 Planning: Organizing and Outreach
Once the City approved the submitted applications, neighborhoods assembled their organizing groups, conducted outreach into the community to generate community involvement and ideas, and developed a scope of work that included broad themes around which their plans would be organized. They then created a process to select members of the Phase 2 planning committees. Most planning groups completed Phase 1 planning in 6 months to one year.
- Phase 2 Planning: Developing and Validating the Neighborhood Plans
Neighborhood planning groups were responsible for crafting the plans. Consultants frequently played a significant role in this process. Members of the community reviewed the proposed plan, provided feedback, and validated the plan. After the neighborhoods validated (approved) their draft plans they sent the plans to staff, City Council and Planning Commission for initial review. Most planning groups required one to two years to complete Phase 2 planning.
- Post-Planning Phase: Approval and Implementation of the Neighborhood Plans
City departments worked with neighborhood planning groups to create a matrix of the neighborhood plans which was a compilation of all the plan's action items. After the community validated the plan matrix, the narrative plan and other documents were sent to the City Council for approval.

"The NPP was an impressive grassroots endeavor, but because it was a bottom-up program, it had to be highly organized in order to be legitimate. It had to fit into the Comprehensive Plan and the City's context. This required a labyrinth of regulations and procedures."

—NPO project manager

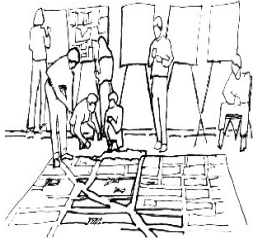
"I learned from being 'in the trenches.' I participated in an informal group of neighborhood planners from Wallingford, Queen Anne, Fremont, and Ballard. We met over dinner to talk about what we were doing. It helped us feel that our grasp wasn't as tenuous as we thought."

—neighborhood planner

The following pages describe these phases of neighborhood planning in more detail.

THE PRE-APPLICATION PHASE: ***MOBILIZING THE NEIGHBORHOOD***

THE INITIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE



As soon as the City announced plans for the NPP, project managers began to inform communities about how to get involved and identified people who were interested in neighborhood planning in each of the eligible areas. The initial planning groups drew members from diverse interests and organizations, residents, and business people who lived and worked in the neighborhood. Other interested individuals could join by contacting the project manager or the planning group members. These initial groups usually became the official organizing committees and pursued the following goals during the pre-application phase:

Stakeholders often included the following: residents, property owners and tenants, business owners, community organizations, social service providers and their clients, workers, fraternal and trade associations, schools and their students, major institutions such as universities, medical centers, religious institutions, and developers.

PRE-APPLICATION GOALS

Goal 1: Establish a group to identify stakeholders and organize the neighborhood. Stakeholders are key people and organizations in the planning area that represent the diversity and uniqueness of each area.

Goal 2: Identify an organizing committee. Organizing committees were typically composed of 10 to 15 people who began the planning process. To receive recognition and support from the City, organizing committees were required to demonstrate that their membership:

- ◆ Reflected the diversity and unique character of its planning area
- ◆ Reflected stakeholder analysis based on demographic data, community profile, and other outreach materials provided by NPO
- ◆ Was composed chiefly of stakeholders with interest in the planning area
- ◆ Worked with NPO in outreach and organizing efforts

(Organizing Committee Guidelines”, Program Elements Binder. 3/21/96)

Goal 3: Begin to refine the planning area. One of the first tasks of the organizing committees was to identify planning area boundaries. They sought to propose boundaries that reflected traditional neighborhood character and identity, history, and geography. The organizing committees were required to include the City’s Urban Villages within their neighborhood planning area, and were encouraged to establish a manageable size, but otherwise were given few restrictions in setting their planning areas.

Goal 4: Apply for Phase 1 Funding. Organizing committees submitted a neighborhood application to the City to receive Phase I funding and begin the actual planning process.

(“Seattle Neighborhood Planning Guidelines”, Program Elements Binder.)

KEY PRODUCT: THE NEIGHBORHOOD APPLICATION

On behalf of the community, the neighborhood organizing committees submitted an application for Phase 1 neighborhood funding. The application identified the membership of the organizing committees, a fiscal agent, and preliminary planning area boundaries. The application also included the committees' Phase 1 Work Plan—a document that explained in detail how the organizing committees planned to conduct outreach in order to develop a community vision. The application served as the foundation for the official contract between NPO and the organizing committees.

THE CITY'S ACTIONS



During the pre-planning phase, NPO guided and responded to the neighborhoods' actions and planned the next stages of the NPP. Project managers provided information to people and helped organizing committees submit their application for Phase 1. The project managers reported to the NPO Director on the neighborhoods' progress. The NPO Director briefed the Mayor on a regular basis to report progress and issues.



The City also developed strategies to inform and involve City officials and key staff in the planning process. The City Council designated the NPP as a priority in its agenda for the duration of the four-year process. It created a new Council committee, the Neighborhood Planning and Community Development committee, to handle neighborhood planning-related issues. The Council also assigned each of its members to serve as a "Council Steward" to follow specific neighborhoods through the planning process. This system was intended to provide people direct contact with the City's elected officials. The Mayor's cabinet held a retreat focused on the NPP early in the process. The Mayor, NPO Director, and other department heads met on a monthly basis to facilitate communication at all levels of the planning program and address issues as they surfaced.



As the planning program began, NPO worked with NPAC to prepare guidelines and to create a smooth transition between Phase 1 and Phase 2 planning. Department staff also developed a community support program to inform and train people involved in neighborhood planning. Staff developed the "Outreach Tool Set" that presented methods for outreach and communication with diverse constituencies. Staff also produced the "Neighborhood Planning Program Elements Binder", a loose-leaf notebook of guidelines, procedures, helpful hints, and overall requirements of the process. City departments contributed "how-to" guides, or tools, on land use and zoning, housing, public safety, right of way and pedestrian environment improvements and other topics. These became part of the "Neighborhood Planning Toolbox" that was located in branch libraries, community centers and other neighborhood facilities.

PHASE 1: OUTREACH AND VISIONING

THE ORGANIZING COMMITTEES

The neighborhood organizing committees became the administrative group for Phase 1 once the City approved the neighborhoods' application and Phase 1 work plan. The committees' goals included conducting extensive outreach to their planning areas, creating a neighborhood vision, and preparing for Phase 2.

PHASE 1 GOALS

Goal 1: Conduct a community assessment. NPO required each neighborhood to create a document describing the people who lived and worked in the neighborhood, how they communicated, and how they supported each other. Moreover the assessment identified stakeholders in the planning area who should be involved in the planning process. In a typical community assessment, neighborhoods:

- ◆ Reviewed previous neighborhood plans to identify relevant issues and ideas
- ◆ Conducted surveys to identify contemporary concerns and interests
- ◆ Analyzed data to ascertain existing conditions, trends, needs, opportunities, and perceptions in the community

Neighborhood planning groups usually used comprehensive community profiles provided by the Strategic Planning Office and other City departments in addition to their own research to prepare the assessment. Many groups hired consultants or administrative staff to assist them in completing surveys and compiling documents.

Goal 2: Create and execute an outreach plan. Organizing committees developed outreach plans that also described how they would involve community members in the planning process, particularly stakeholders identified in the assessment. These plans detailed how organizing committees would solicit ideas and opinions, what methods would be used to measure community participation, and how the success of outreach efforts would be evaluated.

Demographic Information: The organizing committees used demographic information from the City's community profiles to develop their outreach strategies and to identify stakeholders. This information helped the groups decide where and how to focus outreach efforts.

Outreach Strategies: Outreach plans varied from neighborhood to neighborhood. Project managers encouraged neighborhoods to involve the broadest possible spectrum of the community. Organizing committees reported the results of their outreach efforts to the project managers. Outreach strategies included surveys, forums, interviews, questionnaires, workshops, newsletters, and email letters.

Goal 3: Create a neighborhood vision and report to the community. During Phase 1 the organizing committees worked with community members to identify a vision for the neighborhood. The product, a neighborhood vision statement, described the neighborhoods' vision for the future and related neighborhood goals and values.

Outreach embodied the NPP's key organizing principle: to ensure that all stakeholders' voices were heard and considered in the planning process.

Uptown/ Queen Anne neighborhood planners experienced success with their "sidewalk outreach" strategy. They set up a card table at a busy intersection and talked with passersby. They were able to talk with 30 – 50 people throughout a ninety minute lunch period.

The Beacon Hill Planning Group created a bilingual newsletter and hired translators to help them communicate with the diverse ethnic population in their neighborhood.

In general, groups posted notices in community papers, created email lists, sponsored community events, and generated interest in the neighborhood plan by talking face-to-face with people.



Public Review: After organizing committees carried out their visioning process, they held neighborhood events where they presented draft neighborhood visions for broad community review and validation. Many neighborhoods organized these events as “neighborhood celebrations” in order to draw interest and attendance. During the neighborhood events, community members were encouraged to raise concerns, debate issues, and vote on the draft vision statements. Those who couldn’t attend were sent copies and asked to vote by mail to ensure the highest possible rate of participation. After the review process and resulting amendments, neighborhood organizing committees produced their neighborhood vision that would guide development of the plan. (*“Neighborhood Planning: Step-By-Step Guidelines”. Program Elements Binder.*)

Goal 4: Identify issues to address in the neighborhood plan. The organizing committees extracted key issues from their endorsed neighborhood visions to address in their neighborhood plans during Phase 2. This became the framework for their neighborhood planning efforts in Phase 2.

Goal 5: Prepare for Phase 2. To get ready for the next phase, the organizing committees were required to complete the following tasks:

- ◆ Develop, finalize, and validate Phase 2 work plans, which included a scope of work, budget, and timeline. The scope of work outlined how the plan would comply with the Comprehensive Plan; roles for the community, the City and consultants; and strategies for outreach and decision-making.
- ◆ Organize the Planning Committees. People were recruited to form planning committees that would replace the organizing committees to carry out the tasks to craft neighborhood plans. The planning committees’ membership was required to reflect community stakeholders.
- ◆ Finalize planning area and outreach boundaries.

Goal 6: Report to the City. Organizing committees were required to report on their progress in the following ways:

- ◆ Ongoing reports to NPO, documenting outreach efforts
- ◆ Final Phase 1 report to NPO, summarizing Phase 1 results
- ◆ Phase 1 report to the City Council
- ◆ City staff review of the Phase 2 proposal
- ◆ Presentation to the City Council Neighborhoods and Community Development Committee, which held meetings in neighborhoods throughout the city
- ◆ Completion of NPO’s Phase 1 checklist

When neighborhoods accomplished their reporting requirements, they signed a Phase 2 contract with the City. Neighborhoods then received the remainder of their funds to carry out the next phase in the planning process.

KEY PRODUCT: NEIGHBORHOOD VISION DOCUMENT

The neighborhood visions identified issues and goals that communities wanted to address in the development of the neighborhood plans during Phase 2. A neighborhood vision described area boundaries, capital facilities, transportation, and other key priority issues for the neighborhood. The details and format of the neighborhood visions varied, but all focused on the values and goals for the neighborhood, and the role people would play in the larger community. Some visions consisted of a list of the neighborhood's values and goals. Others told a story of what life in that neighborhood might be like 20 years hence. While the vision did not have legal standing, it did play an integral part in the planning process.

Examples of Neighborhood Plan Vision Statements

From the Delridge Neighborhood Plan:

"Delridge is a place where the community and the natural environment are integrated; where open space and natural areas are preserved, interconnected, well maintained, and safe..."

From the Georgetown Neighborhood:

"As Georgetown plans its future, we will work to maintain what we always have been: a strong, valuable manufacturing and industrial center that also includes the presence of an affordable 'in city' residential community..."

From the Denny Triangle:

"Denny Triangle, one of Downtown's five urban villages, possesses within its boundaries a unique opportunity to accommodate growth, as well as expand and enhance such components of our neighborhood as: employment, residential, office, retail, technology based business, transportation and neighborhood amenities."

THE CITY'S ACTIONS

Mid-Term Program Evaluation: The City hired a consultant (through the Strategic Planning Office) to conduct a mid-term evaluation of the NPP. This evaluation took place in 1997. The consultant's evaluation reported on the program's overall successes and obstacles since the project's conception. The evaluation recommended future actions by the City and neighborhoods that would enhance the neighborhood plans and the efficacy of the entire planning program. The Strategic Planning Office, NPO, and NPAC worked closely to verify information and review findings and analyses for this task. Since planning committees progressed at differing rates throughout the planning process, the mid-term evaluation looked at planning processes in varying phases of their work.

PHASE 2: CRAFTING THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Once the Phase 2 contract was signed, the neighborhood planning committees began to develop their neighborhood plans, usually through subcommittees and with assistance from private consultants. Phase 2 planning typically spanned one to two years. (“Planning Committee Guidelines”, Program Elements Binder. 3/21/96)

PHASE 2 GOALS

Goal #1: Continue and intensify outreach efforts. The planning committees needed to produce neighborhood plans that were supported and approved by the community. The committees worked to ensure that a balanced representation of stakeholders participated in developing the plans. They also sought to overcome obstacles they encountered during Phase I outreach efforts, drawing from their consultants and City resources as needed. The planning committees conducted outreach based on the strategies identified in the Phase 2 work plans. They contacted groups and individuals who were not involved in Phase I, encouraged their participation in the program, and incorporated their ideas and interests into the neighborhood plans.

Goal #2: Create a neighborhood plan. Many plans contained similar elements based on the Comprehensive Plan and community priorities. During Phase 2 neighborhood planning committees worked to develop goals, strategies and recommendations from data gathered during Phase 1 and Phase 2. Throughout this process, the quality and organization of the plans changed and improved as neighborhood groups and consultants learned from each other. At the conclusion of this process, neighborhood planning committees submitted their draft plans to the City and community for review.

- ◆ **Sub-committees:** Neighborhood planning committees typically formed subcommittees to focus on specific issues or areas of interest, such as transportation, open space, or public safety. The subcommittees identified goals and developed strategies and actions to carry out these goals.
- ◆ **Consultants:** In Phase 2 (as in Phase 1) neighborhood planning groups hired their own consultants to conduct studies, propose strategies for reaching goals and for working with the City, and prepare draft plan documents. By hiring and managing their own consultants, rather than relying on City staff or City-hired consultants, planning committees retained more control over their planning work.

Goal #3: Validate the neighborhood plan. “Validation” meant gaining the community’s support of the neighborhood plan. The validation process ensured that the neighborhood plans represented the interests of a majority of people who lived and worked in the neighborhoods. Each neighborhood was required to gather feedback from members of the community before finalizing their plan. The validation process was designed to prevent a small group from dominating any neighborhood’s planning process and to ensure that a broad spectrum of voices was reflected in the plan.

“During the transition into Phase II, our groups took a little hiatus. We lost momentum, members and focus. We needed to conduct substantial outreach efforts to make up for it. Why did this happen? Perhaps the timing affected us. It happened over the summer.”
--neighborhood planner

Two Words about Consultants:
“We had a very good consultant team. They went far beyond their obligations, providing technical assistance, facilitated meetings, and helped a neighborhood planner create a website.”
--neighborhood planner

“We relied too heavily on our consultants to write the plan, especially when the consultant didn’t meet our expectations. The plans reflect the consultants a lot.”
--neighborhood planner

“Validation of the plan was a tremendously controversial thing. Several neighborhoods argued over this concept regularly. In one neighborhood, participants even subverted the process with their own surveys.”

–neighborhood planner

“We had some land people who disagreed with the plan and organized to fight against some recommendations. These splinter groups, however, did help in the plan’s development, and many compromises were made.”

–neighborhood planner

- ◆ **The Validation Mailers:** Each neighborhood planning group, with assistance from NPO, prepared a Validation Mailer that was mailed to residents, businesses, and organizations throughout the planning area. The illustrated mailers described the goals and recommendations from each draft neighborhood plan.
- ◆ **The Validation Events:** Each neighborhood sponsored a “validation event” where the draft plan’s visions, goals and recommendations were presented to the public. Most planning groups presented the materials visually through the use of story boards and printed documents. Some groups created slide programs or multimedia events. In all cases, neighborhood planners conferred with City staff, consultants, and members of the public to answer questions and debate the merits of specific proposals until they resolved most issues. Finally, community members voted on the plan’s conclusions.
- ◆ **The Final Draft Plan:** After the validation event, the planning committees revised their draft plans to reflect feedback gathered from the community. These changes resulted in the final neighborhood plans. In many cases, project managers served as facilitators to help resolve conflicting plan ideas. Plan recommendations sometimes changed dramatically after the validation event. Planning committees often used consultants to prepare and design their final documents.

Goal #4: Submit the final draft to City. When the neighborhood and the City agreed upon a final neighborhood plan, the neighborhood planning committee submitted the document to City staff for the formal City review process.

Variety in the Plans

Many neighborhood plans identified high priority issues such as creating a community center, improving public safety, creating bike paths, changing land use regulations, and calming traffic. The plans included anywhere from 50 to 200 specific proposals and actions. Almost every plan included major strategies for the business or neighborhood core, open space and parks, and transportation. Several plans included strategies for improving human services, public safety, economic development, drainage, and neighborhood arts. The plans included general as well as specific recommendations, maps, and supporting descriptions and analysis.

KEY PRODUCT: NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

Each neighborhood plan was intended to become a widely supported and understood vision and guide to the neighborhood’s future. Each plan strove to present clear priorities and recommended actions to achieve that vision. A neighborhood could choose the topics addressed in its plan. Such flexibility resulted in plans that varied widely in their scope, level of detail, presentation, and format. However, the City required that each plan accomplishes the following:

- ◆ Be consistent with the citywide Comprehensive Plan or identify where amendments are needed, including their justification
- ◆ Contain final urban village boundaries
- ◆ Be legal and valid under the State Environmental Policy Act and other applicable laws
- ◆ Contain prioritized recommendations
- ◆ Be presented in an easily understandable format
- ◆ Document outreach processes that demonstrate and measure effort, participation, and community support for the plan
- ◆ Articulate a concrete strategy and identify available resources to realize each recommendation

THE CITY'S ACTIONS

The neighborhoods' planning efforts demanded significant levels of involvement from the City. City officials and departmental staff provided general guidance to the NPP, provided technical expertise on a variety of issues, reviewed the feasibility of proposals, and provided specific responses to recommendations in the final neighborhood plan documents. The City's project managers continued to clarify the City's expectations of neighborhood plans to the planners. They also encouraged collaboration between department staff and neighborhood planning groups on specific areas of concern. For example, staff from the City's transportation department met with several groups in West Seattle to develop joint transportation strategies that affected multiple neighborhoods.

The R&R Team Review Consisted of the Following Steps:

Submission to the R&R Team

The project manager submitted the neighborhood plans to the R&R Team.

R&R Analysis

R&R Team staff analyzed the feasibility of the neighborhoods' planning goals and confirmed whether or not proposed planning activities conflicted with City policies or legislation.

Exploring Alternatives with the Neighborhoods

The R&R Team and project managers worked with the neighborhoods to address problems and explore alternatives for the plans.

Final Department Responses

R&R Team members crafted final departmental responses to plan recommendations.

NPO continued to ensure that outreach was inclusive and met the City's guidelines. When a planning committee could not fulfill NPO expectations, the NPO Director considered its situation and determined whether or not that planning committee could proceed in the planning process. City staff—particularly NPO staff and occasionally the City Council staff—worked to mediate disagreements between groups.

As plans were finalized, City officials and staff developed a process to formally review and respond to plans and their specific recommendations. The City formed a Review and Response Team (R&R Team) whose membership drew from all City departments affected by neighborhood planning. This team reviewed each neighborhood's plan recommendations and coordinated formal City department responses to the plans' proposals. The Strategic Planning Office coordinated this formal City response.

In addition to participating in the R&R Team, City departments provided the neighborhoods with technical assistance as they prepared their plan and developed specific proposals and recommendations. They often researched and analyzed specific problem areas, suggested strategies and solutions for them and assessed feasibility of neighborhood proposals.

As the neighborhoods began to submit their plans to the City, the City developed standardized procedures for reviewing and approving the neighborhood plans and a consistent format for carrying the plan recommendations forward to the City Council. Thus City staff developed the Approval and Adoption process, which was the final phase of the NPP.

Post-Planning Phase: THE APPROVAL AND ADOPTION (A&A) PROCESS

CITY AND NEIGHBORHOODS: CREATING A LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE

As neighborhood plans neared completion, the City realized it could not adopt all neighborhood plans precisely as they were written due to variations in the plans' scope and level of detail. The challenge for City staff was twofold: 1) how could the City incorporate the neighborhood plans into the Comprehensive Plan in a way that was consistent with City policies? and 2) how could the City recognize the neighborhood plans in a way that preserved the intent of the plans and ensures they are implemented in the coming years?



In 1998 the City developed the Approval and Adoption process (A&A) which responded to the variation in the plans' design, detail, goals, and methodology. As the first neighborhoods completed their plans, consultants and City staff worked with neighborhoods to prepare the A&A package. In this legislative package, City staff translated the goals stated in the neighborhood plans into policies that could be added to the Comprehensive Plan. The community and City staff compiled key recommendations and actions from the plans into a detailed spreadsheet (A&A Matrix) that would serve as a work plan for City staff and the neighborhood. The legislative package also included legislative resolutions and ordinances upon which the City Council would vote regarding any land use or zoning changes, or other ordinances to be enacted. This system standardized the review of the plans while trying to preserve the intent of the plans' overall goals and specific recommendations. The narrative plan was recognized by resolution by the City Council.

POST-PLANNING PHASE GOALS

Goal #1: Create an A&A matrix from the neighborhood plan. City staff worked with planning committees and their consultants to formulate an "A&A matrix" that itemized recommendations from the neighborhood plan. The A&A matrix was a spreadsheet that organized the plans' recommendations by general categories and levels of priority. It contained City responses and commitments to each recommendation, estimated costs and expected community roles.

Goal #2: Prepare neighborhood plan policies as Comprehensive Plan amendments. The neighborhood, working with the Strategic Planning Office and NPO, developed policies for their neighborhood plan that were added by ordinance into the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Goal #3: Prepare legislation. Where appropriate, legislation was enacted relating to neighborhood plan recommendations. These were primarily zoning changes.

Goal #4: Submit final matrix to City Council for approval. When the neighborhood and the City staff completed a final A&A package, the planning committee formally presented the documents to the City Council for final review and action. The Seattle Planning Commission also sought to ensure that the City's responses to the neighborhood plans were thorough and provided clear direction to the Council and the neighborhoods regarding the City's intended actions.

City Council Process

The City Council Neighborhood Planning and Community Development (NP&CD) Committee played a major role in the Adoption & Approval process, working closely with the City departments (primarily SPO and NPO) to craft the process and determine how the Council would review and adopt the neighborhood plans.

When neighborhoods completed their plans and submitted them to the City for approval, the Council NP&CD Committee held tours in each neighborhood in order to learn about issues addressed in each plan. Council stewards, the Mayor and department representatives also participated in these activities.

"If you're going to ask neighborhoods to do neighborhood planning, the City's job is to listen and avoid steering the process too much. To the City's credit, they tried to leave the process as open as they could. There was an inherent tension between the desire for a "hands off" approach with the desire to keep things on track. As a result of their grassroots efforts, a lot of people got involved in planning who never would have. There were true results. Because of that, we now have a better relationship between the neighborhoods and the City."

--neighborhood planner

"I think the NPP was a success. The relationship between the City and neighborhoods was transformed. Because of the NPP, citizens had the energy to create healthy neighborhoods, and it showed that the City was committed to doing so as well. We are slowly turning the "bureaucratic ship." When people talk about their neighborhood, it's now in an entirely different context."

--neighborhood planner

The Executive prepared and submitted to the Council NP&CD Committee a recommended Adoption & Approval package for action by the Council. Council staff reviewed the package and worked with Council members to prepare a decision agenda as a guide to the Council's deliberations. This agenda identified issues that required discussion and action by the Council. The review process was carried out in a series of Committee meetings. Following is the sequence of actions taken by the City Council during the approval and adoption process:

1. Neighborhood planning groups presented their plans, and NPO and SPO presented the A&A package to the City Council Neighborhoods Committee. The Planning Commission also presented its comments and recommendations to the committee.
2. A public hearing took place for members of the public to comment on each plan and A&A package.
3. The City Council NP&CD Committee discussed and made recommendations regarding the A&A package. The Planning Commission provided formal comments and recommendations at the initial committee meeting for each plan.
4. The Committee approved the A&A package, often with revisions, and sent them to the full City Council.
5. The full City Council discussed and voted on each neighborhood's A&A package.

("Neighborhood Plan Approval and Adoption Process – Narrative" Attachment 3. g\projects\neighplan\floexpl.doc. "City Council Steps in the Approval and Adoption Process for Neighborhood Plans", Attachment 4.10/27. Councilmember Conlin, Memorandum. 7/20/98.)

KEY PRODUCT: THE MATRIX

The Approval and Adoption (A&A) matrix standardized the neighborhood plans into a common work plan format. Each matrix was created through collaboration by the neighborhood planning committee, the R&R Team, and SPO staff. Within the matrix, the neighborhood categorized recommendations into “key strategies” and organized these strategies by geographic location and topic. City departments inserted their recommendations within each of the strategies and offered overall suggestions. In addition, the A&A matrix included the following information:

Prioritizing Recommendations in the Matrix

“Our consultant worked out an innovative strategy for how to prioritize recommendations for the matrix. Citizens got \$4 million in play money and could divide it up into different projects. It really helped us decide the neighborhood’s priorities and it was fun.”

–neighborhood planner

“We commented on the City’s products. But our comments were late...and rushed. The matrix format made it difficult to go over. We were getting all burned out and just wanted to get it done.”

–neighborhood planner

“The Approval and Adoption matrix was designed to track any and all neighborhood plan recommendations. One drawback of this attention to specifics was an overwhelming mass of detail. The matrix became a negotiating tool between the neighborhood planners and the City; it was not designed for that purpose. If I had to do it over again, I would develop a simpler, clearer review mechanism.”

–SPO staff

- The community’s priority for each recommendation
- The anticipated timeframe for implementation
- Cost estimates
- Which department would implement each recommendation
- A City response to each recommendation

City Actions: The Policy Docket

As the City reviewed neighborhood plans and matrices, the City began to see many plan recommendations that involved policy issues with citywide implications. Rather than decide these issues on a plan-by-plan basis, the City Council decided to hold action on the various recommendations until the City could resolve the policy issues. Examples of policy docket issues included neighborhood conservation districts and specific transportation and land use concerns. SPO was given the responsibility of coordinating City analysis and action on the policy docket. SPO created interdepartmental teams to focus on each policy docket issue and recommended how each issue should be resolved. This resulted in a work plan that spanned two years and included reports to the City Council as each issue was addressed and specific responses or actions were recommended.

Implementation and Stewardship: The City's Commitment to the Neighborhoods

From the inception of the Neighborhood Planning Program, NPP participants recognized the importance of implementing the neighborhood plans. City decision-makers, staff and neighborhood planners wanted to make sure the plans did not "sit on a shelf". While the NPO focused primarily on helping neighborhoods develop plans with clear recommendations and priorities, the Executive and Council began to explore implementation strategies. They focused on supporting the implementation of neighborhood plans through City funding and organizational resources.

As of May 2001, a majority of neighborhood plan stewardship groups (31 of 39) say they have been somewhat or very successful in progressing toward the long-term goals and objectives set forth in their neighborhood plans.
--Neighborhood Plan Stewardship Survey, May 2001, Seattle Planning Commission

Funding Strategies

The City identified the following funding strategies to implement neighborhood plans:

- 1 **Existing City Budgets.** City decision-makers committed to carry-out necessary administrative changes and smaller projects within existing departmental budgets. Some of these changes could be funded through current budgets while other programs and policies were small enough to integrate into future City funding.
- 2 **The Early Implementation Fund.** The City recognized the importance of realizing immediate, tangible results from the neighborhood plans by establishing the Early Implementation Fund. This fund allocated \$50,000 to each neighborhood upon approval of their A&A package. The Early Implementation Fund allowed neighborhoods to implement high priority small projects immediately.
- 3 **Broad Funding strategies:**
 - The City was successful in obtaining voter approval for several bond/levy measures that helped to fund priorities in neighborhood planning areas and projects in other neighborhoods throughout the city. In 1998, voters approved \$196 million in new taxes to build or renovate the 27 libraries in Seattle. Voters in the City approved a \$198.2 million parks and recreation levy in 2000 that will fund many neighborhood plan-related projects.
 - The Sound Transit light rail project, approved by the voters in 1995, provided funding for station area planning, station design, and street/pedestrian related improvements along the light rail route. This resulted in urban design and development strategies in specific neighborhood planning areas. While resources were originally planned for street and pedestrian improvements, these proposals have been greatly scaled-back due to Sound Transit budget problems.
 - Finally, the City Council and Mayor tripled the existing Neighborhood Matching Fund in 1999 (adding \$24 million) to help communities implement recommendations from their neighborhood plans.

Approaches to Neighborhood Plan Stewardship

In Crown Hill/ Ballard, the Ballard District Council coordinates issue-specific committees that work to implement specific recommendations from the neighborhood plan.

Central Area neighborhood planners have identified existing groups in the community to implement aspects of their neighborhood plan.

WEaving Wallingford is the stewardship group for the Wallingford neighborhood planning group. It is located in a storefront office and encourages collaboration between organizations within the community.

City Commitments and Organizational Strategy

The City recognized that it needed greater organizational capacity to support implementation of neighborhood plans. City leaders took several actions:

1. Statement of Leadership. The Executive and Council developed a "City Commitment to Neighborhood Plan Stewardship" which articulated the City's commitment to implementing neighborhood plans and how plan implementation would be conducted.
2. Citywide Organizational Structure. The Mayor, with support from the City Council, created an ongoing organizational structure to support neighborhood plan implementation. This included:
 - Establishing six geographic areas of the city (Sectors) and calling upon departments to incorporate this geographic-based structure into their service delivery and operations
 - Creating a new Neighborhood Development and Preservation Division to the Department of Neighborhoods to manage neighborhood plan implementation and related neighborhood planning activities (historic preservation; major institutions planning)
 - Hiring six Neighborhood Development Managers (NDMs) responsible for coordinating and managing neighborhood plan implementation activities between the community and City departments within the six sectors.

WHO'S WHO

A SUMMARY OF KEY PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR ROLES

Policy Makers and Advisors:

Made broad, citywide decisions that affected both government and members of the community.

Mayor. Seattle's non-partisan mayor provided executive direction to all City departments. In 1994-95, Mayor Norm Rice initiated the City's Neighborhood Planning Program (NPP). Mayor Paul Schell guided the City through the end of the NPP and the creation the City's implementation efforts.

City Council. Seattle's nine non-partisan City Council members are elected at-large from throughout the city. The City Council's Neighborhood Planning and Community Development committee oversaw the NPP, and was guided by Committee Chair, Councilmember Richard Conlin. The City Council approved final neighborhood plan legislation.

Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee (NPAC). This City-sponsored committee was composed of community members, City Council members, Planning Commissioners and directors of City departments. NPAC advised the Mayor, City Council, and the Neighborhood Planning Office on all matters of the NPP from the inception of the process.

Planning Commission. The Seattle Planning Commission is a quasi-independent body of fifteen community members (appointed by the Mayor with approved by the City Council) that advises the Mayor and City Council on planning policy and major development plans. The Planning Commission assisted and advised the neighborhoods and the Neighborhood Planning Office. Two members served on the NPAC. The Commission conducted a formal review of each neighborhood plan and the City's responses, and provided written comments and recommendations to the City Council.

Neighborhood Planners:

made decisions that represented the interests of the neighborhoods, carry out the planning process

Neighborhood planning committees. People in the community (both residents and business people of each planning area) conducted the NPP and validation process for their neighborhood plan. They also selected and supervised consultants.

Consultants. Neighborhood planning committees hired consultants to provide technical and planning assistance. Consultants helped neighborhoods conduct research and outreach, design and execute planning processes, create graphics to illustrate plan concepts, prepare the draft and final planning documents.

City Staff:
Carried forth City government's legal and programmatic commitments and provided technical assistance

Neighborhood Planning Office (NPO). NPO was responsible for developing and coordinating the entire neighborhood planning project, and was directed by Karma Ruder. The office served as a liaison between the City and the neighborhood planning groups both by conveying information and by coordinating actions. This office closed at the conclusion of the NPP in June 1999.

Project managers. Project managers were the principal staff employed by NPO to carry out the mission of NPO. Ten project managers were assigned to work directly with neighborhood planning groups.

Strategic Planning Office (SPO). SPO provided broad policy analysis and coordination for the Mayor and City Council. This office developed the Comprehensive Plan Urban Villages strategy, including initially developing the concept of neighborhood planning, and managed the City's review of the neighborhood plans and the Approval and Adoption process. Finally, SPO provided information such as detailed demographic and development "profiles" for each proposed urban village, as well as numerous "tools" to demystify the art and science of planning for citizen planners. These tools were part of a "neighborhood planning toolbox," one of the major products of the neighborhood planning program.

Review and Response Team (R&R). The Review and Response Team was an interdepartmental team of City department representatives that met regularly during Phase II of the planning process. The R&R provided technical assistance to neighborhoods and reviewed the matrices to ensure an appropriate level of departmental commitment. This effort was coordinated by SPO and included representatives from the Parks Department; Seattle Transportation; Seattle Public Utilities; Seattle City Light; City Council Central Staff; the City's Law Department; Department of Design, Construction and Land Use; the Department of Housing and Human Services; Seattle's Fire Department and Police Department; the Office for Economic Development; the Executive Services Department; and the Seattle Planning Commission.

Technical support. City staff provided technical support for neighborhood plans, generated data and maps for the City and neighborhoods, and saw that the program met Comprehensive Plan guidelines. Data and maps were originally available in paper format and later appeared on an interactive CD-ROM, putting a powerful Geographic Information System in the hands of neighborhood planners.

Department of Neighborhoods (DON). The Department of Neighborhoods houses staff who support the implementation of neighborhood plans, including the Neighborhood Development Managers who facilitate plan implementation within the six sectors.

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Seattle Planning Commission

Neighborhood Planning Assessment Interdepartmental Team

Marty Curry, Seattle Planning Commission
Marilynne Gardner, City Budget Office
Rebecca Herzfeld, Department of Neighborhoods
Susan McLain, Seattle Planning Commission
Phyllis Shulman, Legislative Aide to Councilmember Richard Conlin
Ann Sutphin, Strategic Planning Office

Technical Review and Contribution

Councilmember Richard Conlin	Chris Leman
Susan Dehlendorf	Ref Lindmark
John Eskelin	D'Anne Mount
Barbara Gray	Mike Perring
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Ellen Kissman	Ann Sutphin
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